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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001383

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FOR THE SECRETARY, UNDERSECRETARY BURNS, UNDERSECRETARY
DOBRIANSKY, AND UNDERSECRETARY HUGHES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWMN](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TAHIR-KHELI DISCUSSES PAKISTAN, WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY MENON AND PRIME MINISTER
ADVISOR BARU

Classified By: DCM Geoffrey Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary. In separate meetings with Foreign Secretary
Shiv Shankar Menon and Prime Minister Media Advisor Sanjaya
Baru, Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli:

- discussed Indo-Pakistan relations, agreeing that the
relationship is in relatively good shape at this time;
- urged her interlocutors to make the issue of women's
empowerment an important part of our foreign policy dialogue
(reported septel); and
- called for greater cooperation in democracy initiatives,
while lauding India for its proactive role in the UN
Democracy Fund.

Menon:

- described Indo-Pak relations as having reached a new level
of trust, although some tough decisions remain; and
- agreed that women's issues should be elevated in our
bilateral and multilateral dialogue;

Baru:

- expressed optimism regarding the Indo-Pak relationship; and
- called for American politicians to understand the
complexity of the potential Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline.

End Summary.

Menon and Baru Discuss Indo-Pak

12. (C) Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli made separate calls on Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon and Sanjaya Baru, Media Advisor to the Prime Minister, on March 21, and discussed the state of Indo-Pak relations and the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. (Note: Both meetings, along with others during her trip to New Delhi, also included significant discussions on the desire to elevate the issue of women's empowerment in our bilateral and multilateral dialogues. Those portions of her meetings with Menon and Baru are being reported septel. End Note.)

13. (C) Menon told Ambassador Tahir-Kheli that he believed the government-to-government relationship between India and Pakistan lagged behind positive public sentiment; however, recent dialogue between the two governments had achieved a much higher level of trust. He cited, as an example of the comfort level that has been reached, the joint press conference he and Pakistani counterpart Riaz Mohammad Khan held following the recent Composite Dialogue in Islamabad, noting that for the first time both sides felt enough trust to stand together and field unrehearsed questions, as opposed to past practice of laboring over a joint statement. While both governments appear poised to make the tough decisions that could bring about normalized relations, Menon said he still was not sure what normalization will look like. Menon cited another example of how times have changed in the relationship, telling stories he had heard from Indians who had traveled to Pakistan for a cricket match in February, at the same time that protests broke out over a cartoon depicting the prophet Mohammad. Rather than being targeted, Menon recounted, several Indians, once identified on the

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streets of Lahore that day, were actually helped to safety by Pakistanis. "Now you see the same thing here (in India)," Menon said, "Pakistanis on the streets being helped by Indians." Menon felt people on both sides of the border had become inoculated to the past over-politicization of the Indo-Pak relationship, and believes the lack of obsession over the minutiae of the diplomatic relationship has been a positive development.

14. (C) Baru, too, expressed optimism regarding the relationship between India and Pakistan. Both President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Singh have a clear idea of how to normalize the bilateral relationship, he contended. The problem is not in the political leadership of each country, but rather in some of their respective domestic constituencies who are not fully on board. Baru, whose responsibilities include monitoring the Pakistani press, said he sees a marked difference now in comparison to six months ago, which he believed reflects a change in thinking at the grass roots level. He opined that, "if we can get through the summer without a major terrorist incident," people on both sides of the Line Of Control will grow increasingly confident that peace is achievable.

More Collaboration on Democracy: Menon

15. (C) Responding to Ambassador Tahir-Kheli's praise for India's early and proactive involvement in the UN Democracy Fund, including India's quick response to the U.S. appeal for an initial contribution to the Fund, Menon agreed that the U.S. and India could do more together in the region to promote democracy. India has unique experience as a democracy which came of age in a developing environment, he said, and lauded the democratization work the U.S. and India have collaborated on in Afghanistan. Menon welcomed further discussion on ways to cooperate on democracy initiatives, particularly since the women's empowerment strategy involves a key role for participation and in Central Asia, which he described as the next logical arena for collaboration.

IPI Pipeline Contingent On Many Relationships: Baru

¶6. (C) On March 20, the Press Trust of India printed a headline, "Iran pipeline won't affect Indo-US ties: US Energy Secy." The content of this article came from an interview with Minister of Petroleum Murli Deora after his meeting with Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman. In response to a direct

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query by PolCouns referring to the comments, Baru reiterated statements the Prime Minister made to the Washington Post in July 2005 and has reiterated since, to the effect that "India needs energy and has to look at all sources. The market will decide what is feasible, and India cannot foreclose options, including energy from Iran." Baru then reiterated what he and the Prime Minister have stated privately: without international financial support, that will not be forthcoming given the current security concerns, India will not move forward on the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline project.

¶7. (U) Ambassador Tahir-Kheli has cleared this message.
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